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Summary record of the 20th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 21 October 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Galuška ..... (Czech Republic)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 106: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/54/L.10)

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.10 on a United Nations literacy decade

1. **The Chairman** said that draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.10 had no programme budget implications.

2. **Ms. Otgontsetseg** (Mongolia) said that the following countries had become sponsors: Algeria, Belgium, Bhutan, Cameroon, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Indonesia, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Jamaica, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Portugal, San Marino, Tajikistan, and Viet Nam.

3. A number of revisions had been made to the draft resolution. In the last preambular paragraph, the word "and" in the first line had been changed to "as well as". In paragraph 7, the word "and" after the word "intergovernmental" in the second line had been replaced by "as well as"; the phrase "as well as" in the fifth line had been changed to "and"; and in the seventh line, the words "special sessions" had been deleted and the word "review" had been pluralized.

4. Paragraph 9 had been revised to read: "*Requests* the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of UNESCO and Member States, and other relevant organizations and bodies to submit, through the Economic and Social Council, a proposal for a United Nations literacy decade with a draft plan of action and possible timeframe for such a decade, on the basis of the outcomes of the World Education Forum and the Copenhagen plus-five review special session, to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session;". In paragraph 10 the word "and" after the word "intergovernmental" in the second line had also been replaced by "as well as". Lastly, in paragraph 11, the word "fifty-fifth" had been changed to "fifty-sixth".

5. **The Chairman** said that Benin, Cape Verde, Colombia, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Finland, Guatemala, Guinea, Iceland, Norway, Sierra Leone, Spain, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe also wished to sponsor the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.10, as orally revised, was adopted.

Agenda item 107: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/54/L.3, L.5 and L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.3 on the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

6. **The Chairman** said that draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.3, which had been recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption, had no programme budget implications.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.3 was adopted.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.5 on the activities of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

7. **The Chairman** said that draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.5, which had also been recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption, had no programme budget implications.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.5 was adopted.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.6 on action against corruption

8. **The Chairman** said that draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.6 had no programme budget implications and had been recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.6 was adopted.

Agenda item 109: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/C.3/54/L.13 and L.17/Rev.1)

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.13 on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls

9. **The Chairman** said that draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.13 had no programme budget implications.

10. **Ms. Tahzib-Lie** (Netherlands) said that Azerbaijan, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, the Philippines and Turkey had also become sponsors of the draft resolution, bringing the total number to 112. The text had been revised in two places. At the start of the fifth preambular paragraph, the words "*Reaffirming also*" had been changed to "*Bearing in mind*"; and at the beginning of paragraph 3 (d), the word "develop," had been inserted after the word "To".

11. **The Chairman** said that Cameroon, Congo, Guyana, Malawi, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the United Republic of Tanzania also wished to sponsor the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.13, as orally revised, was adopted.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.17/Rev.1 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

12. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.17/Rev.1 had no programme budget implications.

13. **Ms. Eckey** (Norway) said that Barbados, Benin, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Grenada, Japan, Latvia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Panama, Poland, the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Moldova had become sponsors. In paragraph 14, the word "entities" had been changed to "parts,"and that the last phrase of paragraph 15 had been revised to read: "their submission of reports."

14. **The Chairman** said that Armenia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Paraguay, the Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Uganda, Ukraine, Zambia and Zimbabwe also wished to sponsor the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.17/Rev.1, as orally revised, was adopted.

Agenda item 114: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (*continued*) (A/54/18, 98, 299 and 347)

Agenda item 115: Right of peoples to self-determination (*continued*) (A/54/98, A/54/118-S/1999/633, A/54/299 and 327)

15. **Mr. Lawrence** (Jamaica), speaking on agenda item 114, said that racism had been at the heart of some of the most heinous crimes against humanity and that differences between peoples had been invoked to justify horrible and brutal acts. At the core of racism was the ignorant, fearful belief that those who were different were less deserving of respect, basic freedoms and sometimes even life itself. The success that the United Nations would achieve in the fight against racism depended on the ability of Member States to understand and appreciate diversity in others.

16. Equality among States, and, by extension, equality among peoples, was a fundamental principle of the United Nations; and the Organization had always worked to promote understanding, tolerance, and human rights for all. Ethnic and racial conflicts could be resolved only by a holistic approach that sought to promote not only economic opportunities but also justice, good governance and human rights.

17. In view of the need for a framework for equitable development, Jamaica had been surprised and disappointed to learn from the report of the Secretary-General in document A/54/299 of the continuing lack of interest in the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and, in particular, lack of support for the related Programme of Action. Moreover, the report of the Economic and Social Council for 1999 showed that no proposal had been submitted for consideration under the corresponding agenda item. His delegation was baffled. Was it preferable to keep groups segregated so as to avoid that complex issue altogether? Isolation and xenophobia, it should be remembered, were precursors to racism. Whatever the reason, the existence of the problem must be acknowledged before a solution could be found.

18. Jamaica therefore supported the decision to convene the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001, took note of the recommendation that it should define and debate the economic, historical, cultural and psychological factors that perpetuated racism, welcomed South Africa's conditional offer to host the Conference, and urged the United Nations and Member States to provide the necessary resources.

19. The increasing use of the Internet to propagate the views of racist organizations was disturbing. Efforts should be made to fight that new, insidious manifestation of racism through the same medium; and the communications industry should share some of the responsibility for its misuse. Millions of persons formed their images of other national and ethnic groups solely from those sources. The opportunity to use the Internet to portray national or ethnic groups in a favourable light presented exciting possibilities. Jamaica would assist the United Nations to ensure that the fight against racism was won.

20. **Mr. Erdös** (Hungary) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the European Union on the elimination of racism and racial discrimination and the right to self-determination. Hungary, having experienced firsthand the violence, devastation and suffering caused by intolerance, aggressive nationalism, ethnocentricity and unscrupulous demagoguery during the twentieth century, well understood the importance of the fight against all forms of discrimination. The set of measures designed to combat racism in countries seeking admission to the European Union was a catalyst for change and reform in those countries and a strong positive aspect of the integration process underway in Europe.

21. The situation of the Roma was a problem in Eastern Europe. In Hungary, there were nearly 500,000 Roma in a population of about 10 million persons. The prejudices and tensions, and the occasional atrocities committed against such persons posed grave political dilemmas. The danger was real, since extremist political forces were increasingly tempted to use the Roma as scapegoats for all of the country's ills. With the sweeping changes that had taken place in Hungary's political and economic structures, two thirds of the Roma population had lost their jobs, as compared to only one tenth of the non-Roma population. Thirty to 40 per cent of the Hungarians who could no longer secure their daily subsistence were Roma, putting them at risk of long-term marginalization. In addition, segregation in districts and schools centres endangered the chances for cooperation between the next generation of Roma and the rest of Hungarian society.

22. The Government of Hungary was fully aware that the situation of the Roma was a challenge to the economic and social development of the country. Their social integration could not, however, be quickly achieved. In May 1999, the Government had adopted a set of medium-term measures, accompanied by annual action plans. An interministerial committee for Roma affairs had been established to coordinate the relevant work of the various ministries. In addition, a long-term governmental strategy designed to improve the conditions of life and the social status of the Romas was scheduled to be finalized by 15 September 2000. Many experts, researchers and members of the Roma population were helping to draw up that strategy, which was being monitored by an expert from the Council of Europe.

23. The Roma autonomous administrative office worked closely with the Government in its effort to find solutions to problems in that area, and the Bureau for Ethnic and National Minorities, a governmental department, maintained regular contacts with Roma social organizations. It had created two new consultative committees, the Council on Roma Art and Culture and the Roma Civic Forum, both composed of members of the Hungarian Roma community. The Roma National Center for Information and Culture and public foundations also played an important role. As a consequence of those measures, members of the Roma community were now more active in the management of public affairs, as shown by recent local elections and the growing number of local Roma autonomous administrative bodies.

24. In the view of Hungary, the question of the Roma should, like all other questions related to the situation of minorities, be addressed from a global perspective, with attention to regional considerations. In that context, regional organizations like the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union had an important role to play. The Europe of tomorrow should be a continent of shared values and aspirations with ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity.

25. Hungary was looking forward to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and had welcomed the recent visit of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, who had conferred with the Government and with non-governmental organizations on measures that could be taken to better protect the Roma minority. It would study his report with care and would implement his recommendations. Hungary wished to assure the Special Rapporteur of its willingness to work towards the gradual integration of that vulnerable group. To achieve that end, extensive collaboration would be necessary between the authorities and the general public, both Roma and non-Roma. There was no doubt that the long-term work to be undertaken would contribute to the universal fight against all forms of intolerance.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.